

Off 2 File - 1958

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19 April 1958

Dear Mr. Bissell:

Since it has been some months since I've written I hope this brief summary may answer some questions that may be on your mind.

The arrival of the Hycon gear was most welcomed, and, as you were probably briefed by Dr. Scott and party, is well on the way to being shaken down. In reference to Dr. Scott, [redacted] and Mr. Green; I can't say enough in their behalf as far as their attitude and the manner in which they worked with us. Many small operating discrepancies were cleared up and recommendations on everyday handling procedures all were extremely helpful. We set March aside as the shakedown month since the equipment arrived during this period. Unit reliability figures will be based from April on.

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As to reliability I feel the "B" Configuration is ready. We have had at least two successful flights on each unit. We have flown 9 missions to date, 6 successful. The three losses were due to one shutter (repeats) on one unit. This shutter is being returned. At least one flight per month is scheduled for each unit with repeats if difficulties occur.

The new trackers gave us trouble to start with, but after we found the cause, (locking latch for the film reel binding on the tracker cover) all has been good. On the last 11 flights, 11 were successful or 100%. This is for April.

The A-2's are satisfactory, 7 flights, 6 successful or 85%. The one loss was due to a malfunction in an oblique camera.

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Aircraftwise we are in good shape. During this period modifications have received our main effort. As you know we have around 1,500 man hours to accomplish, 1,000 of this being the new slipper tank installation for 352. This should be completed along with the other modifications by 23 April.

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Exact actual aircraft performance data has been forwarded your operations section for mission planning. Other data is being compiled on the [redacted] configuration and slipper tanks.

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The R & R schedule for the personnel has been clicking off on schedule. All personnel appear to be happy and up to date on time off. Other activity such as our soft ball team, tennis courts, water skiing, and side trips (two to date to [redacted]) all seem to keep up the good spirit of the unit.

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[redacted] support with the C-54's has been a tremendous help. Our relations with them seems to be good. Our present airlift support is most adequate. General Everest appeared to be impressed during his visit. We briefed him primarily on Operation's Capability Figures.

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Dependents are keeping [redacted] busy but he has done an excellent job of keeping them happy. The Air Force has taken over the base commissary so the food situation should improve.

All in all I believe we have the majority convinced they have a "good deal."

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Another subject: I have made a study on the possibility of staging and operating, shop wise, entirely from a C-124. This would be for 2 to 4 missions [redacted] It appears very workable and has many advantages such as: Shop would be set up and all fabrication complete. e.g., electrical connections, etc.; we would carry our own power MD-3 which generates the necessary power requirements. We would use the C-124 elevator to lower the equipment to install in the U-2 close to the tail of the C-124. Curtains would be used for security. This reduces the staging base requirements. By lowering the top deck of the C-124 we could, in a pinch, billet personnel if housing was a problem. Fuel could be prepositioned. For every C-124 load of fuel (60-70 barrels) fly 2½ missions. I would use our C-54 for personnel carrier and U-2 aircraft retrieving if required. This would require the C-124 (mobile shop) to be in place at Adana 5 days prior to move for fabrication of benches, electrical extensions, etc.. We have a deployment plan in draft for this type operation.

A study for utilizing a C-124 for a photo type operation is now under study and also seems very workable. The addition of a portable air-conditioner for the aircraft shop and storage would be required, but these, I believe, are available.

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One last item: [redacted] has been most cooperative in getting items to us on a rush basis. We certainly appreciate this and will continue to use discretion in requesting this type action.

In reading over this letter it appears that no major problems exist. Basically this is true, however, within the unit a great deal of work is layed out for the next two month period. [redacted]

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[redacted] Hycon to increase its overall reliability, and Lockheed its modification work. This is in addition to our regular scheduled pilot proficiency missions, ^{and} program to obtain additional operating

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data. Our unit operation's proficiency at present time for seven pilots is running .45 miles for individual targets, .96 miles for flight lines, and 8.1 miles for celestial observations. These are tracker verified. All this activity keeps a full schedule of work for everyone in addition to keeping the organization ready.

In closing I would like to say that I feel the major concern is probably not with the field units but with Headquarters. This specifically in the continued spirit of inspired aggressive action that created, developed, and gave this project the tremendous, unequalled capability and second the self analysed assurance that mature intelligent use of this potential has and is being exercised in the planning and execution of each mission. This is in no way a pointed remark, but a thought that comes when you consider that we have had two years of operating experience. The one thing that will cause the loss of this capability is the stagnation of personnel in the rut of "the routine." Continued imagination, aggressiveness, and mature judgement will be its salvation.

The personnel here are constantly reminded that there is much room for improvement.

I know you personally are doing everything possible, and my complete confidence is in that fact.

Sincerely,



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2	Colonel Burke - FYI		20 May
3	Mr. Bissell		
4			
5			
6			
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